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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES
TED SCHWINDEN, GOVERNOR
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Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Helena, MT 59620
Fire Marshal Bureau, Department of Justice, 1409 Helena Ave., Helena, MT 59620
Information Unit, Department of Health and Environmental Sciences, Helena, MT 59620
Environmental Information Center, P.O. Box 1184, Helena, MT 59624
Montana Historical Society, 225 N. Roberts, Helena, MT 59601
Marquardt and Billmayer, 1031 South Main, Kalispell, MT 59901

RE: Big Mountain Terrace Subdivision
Flathead County

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The enclosed preliminary environmental review has been prepared for Big Mountain Terrace Subdivision in Flathead County and is submitted for your consideration. Questions and comments will be accepted until August 4, 1983. One extension of time not to exceed seven days will be granted upon request if there is sufficient reason for the request. All comments should be sent to the undersigned.

Sincerely,

Steven L. Pilcher

Steven L. Pilcher, Chief
Water Quality Bureau

SLP/jjg
Enclosures

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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES
Cogswell Building, Helena, Montana 59601
(406)449-3946

PRELIMINARY ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Division/Bureau Environmental Sciences Division/Water Quality Bureau

Project or Application Big Mountain Terrace Subdivision

Description of Project Big Mountain Terrace development consists of 22 single-family lots and 19 multiple-family lots for a total of 98 living units. It is located east of Big Mountain Road approximately 2 miles North of the Big Mountain turnoff. This residential development encompasses 47.42 acres of which 24 acres will remain as natural area. The Ptarmigan Village Subdivision is adjacent to the north.

POTENTIAL IMPACT ON PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

	Major	Moderate	Minor	None	Unknown	Comments on Attached Pages
1. Terrestrial & aquatic life and habitats		X				*
2. Water quality, quantity and distribution			X			*
3. Geology & soil quality, stability and moisture			X			*
4. Vegetation cover, quantity and quality			X			*
5. Aesthetics				X		
6. Air quality			X			
7. Unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources				X		
8. Demands on environmental resources of land, water, air & energy			X			*
9. Historical and archaeological sites					X	*

POTENTIAL IMPACTS ON HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

	Major	Moderate	Minor	None	Unknown	Comments on Attached Pages
1. Social structures and mores				X		
2. Cultural uniqueness and diversity				X		
3. Local and state tax base & tax revenue			X			*
4. Agricultural or industrial production				X		
5. Human health				X		
6. Quantity and distribution of community and personal income				X		
7. Access to and quality of recreational and wilderness activities			X			*
8. Quantity and distribution of employment				X		
9. Distribution and density of population and housing			X			
10. Demands for government services			X			*
11. Industrial & commercial activity				X		
12. Demands for energy			X			
13. Locally adopted environmental plans & goals		X				*
14. Transportation networks & traffic flows			X			*

Other groups or agencies contacted or which may have overlapping jurisdiction Flathead County Planning Board and Staff; Flathead County Commissioners; Flathead County Health Department.

Individuals or groups contributing to this PER. Marquardt, Billmayer Consulting Engineers

Recommendation concerning preparation of EIS It is recommended that an EIS not be prepared.

PER Prepared by: James C. McCauley

Date: 7/20/83

DHES/ESD-2

POTENTIAL IMPACT ON PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. Terrestrial and aquatic life and habitats

According to data provided in the joint application form the proposed area supports varied wildlife species. The following comments were made:

1. Wildlife

a. Big Game Species: The area is frequented by whitetail and mule deer, elk and black bear. During normal winters, deer and elk are found in Sections 3, 4 and 10 to the NW of the site. The proposed site is a logical extension of that range, but for the most part, is probably more important as a spring-summer-fall habitat. Black bear sightings are made throughout the year. Most bear visitations are likely to be spring through the fall, as no known bear dens have been identified on the site.

b. Non Game Species: Over the past two or three years, several grizzly bear have been trapped by the Montana Division of Wildlife and Parks in and around the Haskill Basin area, directly east of the development. Although higher elevations and ridgetops of the Whitefish Range are generally considered to be grizzly habitat, an occasional visitation across the site might be expected, especially if care is not taken with garbage facilities.

c. Small Game Species: The nature of the riparian habitat suggests that the area supports an abundant variety of small and upland species (i.e., ruffed grouse), as well as non-game wildlife (songbirds, small mammals, etc.).

2. Habitat

a. Direct Effects: During construction activity, wildlife habitat will be adversely affected, both for big and small game. Small game will probably return after construction ends. However, big game activity will probably decline due to increased population pressures. It should be noted that open space provisions on the site will help minimize adverse effects on big game activity.

b. Peripheral Effects: The increased development of Big Mountain will most likely lessen big game activity in this immediate area. As noted earlier, traditional big game winter range is NW of the site and it should not be grossly affected.

The subdivision should not result in any negative impact on aquatic life.

2. Water quality, quantity and distribution

A central public sewage collection and treatment system is proposed for Big Mountain Terrace. This system will consist of a standard gravity collection system, an Imhoff tank for removal of solids, and pumps which will transfer sewage to an aerated lagoon site over 4,000 feet east of the subdivision. At that point sewage will be sprayed onto existing ground cover and absorbed by the soil or utilized through plant uptake.

This type of sewage treatment system will provide the best possible treatment for development of this nature. Land application is a tertiary treatment mode which provides for the removal of most nutrients from the sewage. Also, treatment systems such as that proposed require less maintenance and experience fewer operational problems than other comparable sewage treatment methods.

The central water supply system will consist of two wells and a 40,000 gallon storage reservoir. A non-profit corporation will be formed to own and operate these systems.

Surface water will be impacted slightly by the construction of a bridge over a perennial stream on the site. A second stream channel will be diverted into the storm drainage system.

3. Geology and soil quality, stability and moisture

On-site test pits indicate that the soils consist of a 4 to 10 inch layer of organic topsoil with gravelly loam subsoil beneath this. This soil should have slight limitations for spray application of sewage and road construction. These soils are subject to erosion and efforts must be made to promptly reseed disturbed areas.

4. Vegetation cover, quantity and quality

Mixed conifers along with some birch and cottonwood cover 90% of the proposed site. Remaining vegetation consists of brush and grasses. Approximately 11.25 acres of forest will be cleared for road construction, sewage lagoon siting and spray irrigation.

8. Demands on environmental resources of land, water, air and energy

Previously unoccupied land will not be utilized for residential development. The site does not hold any agricultural values and does not have substantial commercial timber value. The primary use is wildlife habitat.

A demand for water resources will result from domestic use.

9. Historical and archaeological sites

It is recommended that a cultural resource survey be conducted in all areas which have not been previously disturbed in order to identify any cultural properties that might be affected by the project.

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POTENTIAL IMPACTS ON HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

3. Local and state tax base and tax revenue

An increase in the local tax base can be expected due to the change from agricultural land to residential development.

7. Access to and quality of recreational and wilderness activities

Since the proposed subdivision site is surrounded by private land, there will be no impact on access to public lands. The removal of wildlife habitat will have some limited impact which was addressed under item #1, Potential Impacts On Physical Environment.

10. Demands for government services

The most significant demand created by this development is that of fire protection. Facilities will be available at three points within the water distribution system for recharge of tankers, however, complete protection with fire hydrants is not available. Two fire districts are available according to comments made in the joint application:

> Fire Protection: The site is currently not part of any fire district. To the North, approximately 4 miles, lies the Big Mountain Fire District Station. To the South, also approximately 4 miles, is the Whitefish Fire District Station. The Whitefish District has a greater capability, both with equipment and in response time, to serve the development. It is recommended that annexation to the Whitefish Fire District become a condition which must be met before the final plat can be approved (see Section 6 on water for further comments).
>
> Increasing residential development in the area is greatly accelerating the potential for a catastrophe, if a major fire occurs. The establishment of a separate fire district for this general area is a consideration that deserves attention in the near future. At present the costs involved for establishing such a district are extremely high (approximately $300,000.00 for fire station and equipment, not including the training of personnel - estimate from Bob DePratu, Whitefish Fire Chief). Further study is recommended to examine when, if ever, the costs involved in such an action are compatible with benefits received.

The development is thought to have little impact on Whitefish area schools. An additional bus route may be necessary at some future date.

Police protection and medical facilities are available in Whitefish.

13. Locally adopted environmental plans and goals

The area proposed for Big Mountain Terrace is designated as agricultural/ silvicultural in the Whitefish Comprehensive Development Plan. Therefore, the development of residential lots is not compatible with this plan. However, an existing subdivision is located immediately adjacent to this development to the North.

14. Transportation networks and traffic flows

The increase of residential development along with ski resort usage may present future traffic congestion problems. Big Mountain Road is currently in the process of being resurfaced. Access to the Haskill Basin is provided by a Forest Service Road which crossed a portion of the site. Increased recreational use of this road may result from occupancy of this subdivision.